

## Minorities under attack Syed Naeem Uddin

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I offer my condolence to the victims and the bereaved families who have lost their love ones and struggling to cope with the tragedy following coward twin church bomb attacks on September 22, 2013, in Peshawar – Pakistan.

Our thoughts and prayers go to the victimised families. This is the time for the government of Pakistan to stop rhetoric about the safety of citizens, minorities, worship places and take tangible steps to protect innocent people from the brutal bloodbaths in Pakistan, repeal blasphemy laws and increase the number of minorities in the civil service, parliament and the judiciary.

Besides blasphemy laws, *The Constitution of Pakistan, Part III: Chapter 1, The Constitution of Pakistan, Notes for Part III: Chapter 3 and The Constitution of Pakistan, Part VII: Chapter 3A, Federal Shariat Court* are discriminatory and in overt violation of religious freedom, freedom of expression, equality and justice. All of these existing laws in Pakistan are used as motivations and foundations for hate crimes and human right violations.

The government of Pakistan must take immediate steps to bring minorities out of fear, they are living with and they feel vulnerable to blasphemy laws – A licence to kill. I strongly suggest that no country should be accepted as “democratic” as long as laws such as blasphemy are not repealed. If the government of Pakistan fails to do so, the fanatic parliamentarians and their families should be banned to enter the EU zone, the United States and Canada and their assets should be seized. An embargo or sanction on Pakistan will only harm the poor citizens already under attack by terrorists, corruption, energy crisis and living costs.

According to Farahnaz Ispahani, a Public Policy Scholar at The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a former member of the Pakistani parliament, “At the time of partition in 1947, almost 23 percent of Pakistan’s population was non-Muslim citizens. Today, the proportion of non-Muslims has declined to approximately 3 percent”.

The first lady of Pakistan, Ra'anna Liaquat Ali Khan, was a converted Muslim – whose struggle for the creation of Pakistan and later for a better Pakistan spanned over six decades. She is remembered as the most devoted and progressive lady in the history of Pakistan who laid the foundation of women empowerment in Pakistan through All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) and Pakistan Women National Guards (PWNG).

Either for the struggle to create Pakistan or to make a better Pakistan of today, minorities have enormous role in Pakistan. Some of them are: [Jogendra Nath Mandal](#), Sir Victor Turner Alvin Robert Cornelius, Pothon Joseph, A. R. Cornelius and Peter O'Reilly. Group Captain Cecil Chaudhry and Wing Commander Mervyn Middlecoat sacrificed their lives for Pakistan in the 1971 war. Then there are also eminent citizens like Justice A R Cornelius, Justice Rana Bhagwandas, Justice Dorab Patel, [Ardeshir Cowasjee](#), Julius Salik and Bapsi Sidhwa, and First Pakistani Noble Laureate DR. Abdul Salam.

In this predominantly Sunni – Deoband country, lynching and atrocities are not limited to the non-Muslims, but Muslim minorities are faced with same perils. Since the split of Indo-Pakistan, Ismailia, Bohra, Parsi, Ahmadiya, Shia and Hazara communities are the engines of Pakistan's economy, education and reputation. It will take thousands of pages to detail their contributions and sacrifices for this country, now all of these peaceful communities are under attack with fast thinning population in Pakistan.

We all need an action other than silence against the parliament shielding behind the curtains of democracy before we see more attacks, blood and bodies of innocent citizens. Democracy is being used as a pretext to please the international community. If the parliamentarians were democratic, they would have resigned on the failure to protect citizens.